

An Evaluation of Civic Education Curriculum Implementation in Selected Secondary Schools of Kabwe District, Zambia

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the implementation of Civic Education curriculum in Zambia, focusing on its effectiveness in fostering democratic and active citizenship. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study investigated administrator and teacher perspectives, student outcomes, and curriculum alignment with national priorities. Data collection involved surveys, interviews, and document analysis. The study found curriculum implementation in Zambia to have a positive influence on enhancing critical thinking, community engagement, and civic knowledge among students. The study recommends context-specific curriculum development, teacher training, and increased resource allocation. Policy implications include integrating Civic Education into national education policy, establishing standards, and fostering partnerships with civil society organizations.

Key terms: Civic Education, curriculum implementation, Active Citizenship and community engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Civic Education is an essential component of the education system that aims to develop responsible and active citizens who are knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities in society (Muleya, 2019; Debbie and Stacey, 2016; Makano and Mukanda, 2019; and Kayaya and Magasu, 2022). In Zambia, Civic Education was incorporated into education curriculum during colonial era (Nkandu, et al., 2020) and was more oriented towards moral instruction and religious edification in order to produce 'good colonial citizens' (Kelly, 1991). Post-independence Zambian Civic Education goals tilted to instilling a national consciousness and unified identity among its people. Following constitutional changes in 1973 and the advent of 2nd republic, the government of President Kenneth Kaunda abolished teaching of Civic Education at senior secondary school level in 1978 as it was feared that it could produce civic minded citizens who would rise against his government after realising their rights.

However, in 1990, Zambia reverted to a multi-party democratic system which ushered in a new era of reforms across various sectors, including education. The government envisioned an education system that promoted democratic values, human rights and active citizen participation (Nkandu, et al., 2020). According to Muleya (2015, 2019), interest in the reintroduction of Civic Education in Zambia's school system arose from a feasibility study which was commissioned by the Southern University/ Democratic Governance Project under USAID in 1995. The study was undertaken by group of experts and academicians from the University of Zambia after realizing that there was a gap in the education of learners for democratic ideals in society such as the inability of the learners to challenge taken for- granted positions in the community; lack of critical thinking skills; and lack of democratic skills like participatory, active, civic engagement and civic involvement just to mention a few. Chondoka, et al (2010) revealed that Civic Education curriculum at senior secondary school level in Zambia was then reintroduced as a pilot project in 2003 in selected secondary schools in Central, Lusaka and Northern Province.

Following positive results recorded during nation examination in 2005, Civic Education at high school was rolled out to all remaining provinces and was taught as an optional subject at senior secondary school level

under Social Sciences department. According to Bergersen and Muleya (2019), the re-introduction of Civic Education at senior level of secondary education aims at renewing an ethos of critical and creative thinking among students, which was seen to be greatly lacking in previous iterations of Civics in Zambia. The reintroduction of Civic Education rose out of the need to produce learners who would be well versed in the ideals and practices of a democratic community.

In 2013, the 'Zambia National Curriculum Framework' recognised and placed Civic Education as a compulsory subject at senior secondary school level with similar direction of seeking to develop active citizenry who are aware of their rights and responsibilities, appreciate diversity and contribute towards national development (MOE, 2013; Muleya, 2019 and Mainde, et al., 2022). There is need to evaluate the implementation of Civic Education curriculum in Zambia to appreciate how it has evolved over time, success made and the challenges it has faced in equipping learners with civic knowledge, skills and civic virtues.

Despite commendable efforts in fostering democratic citizenship and responsible leadership, the implementation of Civic Education curriculum in secondary schools in Zambia remains inadequately understood leading to concerns about its effectiveness in promoting civic competencies, political awareness and community engagement. Various studies have revealed lack of trained teachers (Chishiba, 2017), inadequate resources (Chileshe, 2018 and Chansa, 2023), limited student engagement (Mweetwa and Sichinga, 2020), and assessment and evaluation (Mainde, et al., 2023), limited time allocation and a lack of support and supervision from education authorities (Magasu, 2020) as key challenges in the implementation of Civic Education curriculum. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the extent to which Civic Education curriculum at senior secondary school level is being implemented in Kabwe District in order to identify key successes, challenges and opportunities for improvement. By addressing these issues, we can improve the quality and relevance of Civic Education in preparing students to become active and responsible citizens in a democratic society.

Research Objectives

1. To assess the extent to which Civic Education curriculum is being implemented.
2. To identify the best Civic Education curriculum implementation practices and strategies.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Pedagogy theory (CPT)

Critical Pedagogy theory (CPT) of education aims to empower students to become critical thinkers and agents of social change. It was developed in the late 20th century by a Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, whose seminal book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" was published in 1968 (Morgan, 2000; and Macedo, 2005). In this book, Freire argued that traditional education systems perpetuate social inequalities by treating students as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in the learning process.

One of the key principles of critical pedagogy is the idea of praxis, which is the integration of theory and practice (Morgan, 2000). In other words, critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of connecting classroom learning to real-world issues and encouraging students to apply their knowledge to effect positive change in their communities. This approach helps students see the relevance of their education and empowers them to become active agents of social change.

In evaluating the Civic Education curriculum, educators can use this framework to assess whether the curriculum addresses issues of social injustice, discrimination, and inequality. Mahmoudi, et al. (2014) adduced that, by incorporating critical pedagogy principles, educators can encourage students to critically analyse social problems and take action to effect positive change in their communities. In Civic Education, this means that students should be actively engaged in discussions about social and political issues, encouraged to question authority, and empowered to take action to address injustices in their communities (Mainde, et al., 2023). This theory is rooted in the belief that education is a powerful tool for social change (Diko, 2023) and that educators have a responsibility to help students develop critical thinking skills and a critical consciousness of the world around them. Muhammad (2019) argued that, by promoting critical thinking, dialogue, collaboration, and social justice, this theory can help educators and policymakers ensure that students are being

prepared to actively participate in the civic life of their communities. Through a critical pedagogical approach, Civic Education students can develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to become informed, engaged, and responsible citizens who can contribute positively to society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed pragmatic approach to emphasize the importance of practical consequences and outcomes of beliefs and actions, focusing on what works in practice rather than abstract theoretical ideas in Civic Education curriculum implementation in Zambia. While combining qualitative and quantitative method, the study collected qualitative data through interviews with 20- teachers of Civic Education, and 10- school administrators, while questionnaires collected quantitative data from 100- learners in Civic Education class. Quantitative data was analysed using statistical methods to identify patterns, trends, and correlations, while qualitative data was analysed thematically to identify key themes and patterns that emerged from the respondents. No names of the participant are mentioned in this study and researcher sought ethical clearance from National Health Research Authority (NHRA) before conducting this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study involved observing classroom activities, conducting survey that involved teachers of Civic Education and learners, and interviewing teachers and school administrators.

Extent on Civic Education’s Curriculum Implementation

QUESTION REQUIREMENT	YES%	NO%	SOMETIMES%	NOT RESP. %
Do your teachers incorporate real-life examples and case studies in Civic Education lessons?	21	48	19	13
Are you taught about the rights and responsibilities of citizens in your Civic Education classes?	78	7	12	3
Do you participate in any community service activities as part of your Civic Education curriculum?	15	53	28	4
Do you feel that your Civic Education classes have helped you develop critical thinking skills?	9	54	27	10
Are you encouraged to express your opinions and engage in debates during Civic Education lessons?	40	47	13	1
Do you feel that your Civic Education curriculum has prepared you to be an active and responsible citizen in society?	23	27	48	2

The table above indicate respondent’s views as recorded in the questionnaire administered to them. From the above, learners who agreed that their teachers incorporate real-life examples and case studies in Civic Education lessons are 25(21%), while 57(48%) objected, 23(19%) indicated sometimes and 15(13%) did not tick on any provision. When asked whether they are taught about their rights and responsibilities during Civic Education lessons, 94(78%) agreed, 8(7%) indicated no, while 14(12%) ticked sometimes and 4(3%) chose nothing. The question on community engagement as part of your Civic Education curriculum received 18(15%) agreeing, 64(53%) indicated no while 33(28%) ticked sometimes and 5(4%) never chose anything. From the information provided, 11(9%) agreed on the question of Civic Education lessons having helped them develop

critical thinking skills, while majority 65(54%) denied, 32(27%) indicated sometimes and 12(10%) did not respond to this question.

The researcher also wanted to know whether learners are encouraged to express their opinions and engage in debates during Civic Education lessons. 48(40%) indicated yes, 56(47%) picked no while 15(13%) said sometimes and only 1(1%) was left blank on this question provision. When asked their views on Civic Education having prepared them to be an active and responsible citizens in society, 28(23%) indicated yes, 32(27%) indicated no, while 58(48%) chose sometimes and 2(2%) did not pick any choice.

The value of Civic Education Curriculum

The study revealed the importance of Civic Education on students' attitudes and values, as well as helping them develop a sense of civic pride and commitment to the community. In line with the current study, Sakala (2016) and Muleya (2019) observed that Civic Education provides possibilities for engaging students in civil and political issues. By promoting positive attitudes towards civic engagement and social responsibility, the curriculum helps to inspire students to become active and engaged citizens. One of school administrators (**S.A₁**) has this to say,

“...students learn about their rights and responsibilities, the importance of community engagement, and how to actively participate in democratic processes”.

Muleya and Bergersen (2019) support the current study as observe a key role Civic Education play in creating positive change in learners through arousing their interest to participate in service projects, advocate for social justice; and address local issues that affect them (Mainde, et al., 2022). Through a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on learning experiences, students are able to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to make a difference in their communities.

Adebayo and Zimba (2014) study support the current study in which Civic Education is seen as an important component of education that stimulate in learners the spirit of participation in public life with the acquired knowledge and skills. Further, the study conducted by Kaunda and Mbewe (2018) in Chililabombwe district resonate well with the current study where Civic Education act as a catalyst to modify students' attitudes and behaviours in line with what the community cherish into. Through Civic Education, students are informed of their rights and responsibilities which are key aspects for active and engaged citizen in democratic community.

Civic Education curriculum helps in building critical thinking and decision-making skills among learners. Views of learners (**Q. Ls**) indicates that,

"Civic Education has given them tools to analyze problems, consider different perspectives, and arrive at well-reasoned conclusions".

By teaching students to analyze complex issues, consider multiple perspectives, and make informed choices, the curriculum prepares them to become active and responsible citizens.

Kaumba et al., (2020) shared similar thoughts that civic skills enhance civic engagement which could lead to positive results if appropriately interpreted. By promoting active citizenship and social responsibility, the curriculum helps to foster a sense of civic duty and commitment to the common good. Monze and Magasu (2023) added similar views that both Social Studies and Civic Education play a key role in creating a culture of civic engagement and social change by providing students with opportunities to participate in student-led initiatives, community service projects, and civic engagement activities. Through these experiences, students are able to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to become effective agents of change in their communities. Civic Education curriculum helps in promoting social cohesion and peace-building in Zambia. It fosters a sense of national identity and unity among learners. One of the school administrators (**S.A₅**) commented that,

"We view Civic Education as a tool for promoting social cohesion and building a more inclusive society, and we are dedicated to making it a priority in our educational system."

Previous study conducted by Muleya (2015) perceived that teaching students about Zambia's history, culture, and values embedded in Civic Education curriculum potentially promotes a sense of pride and belonging in their country. Civic Education curriculum helps in promoting social justice and equality in Zambia. By addressing issues of discrimination, inequality, and social exclusion, the curriculum encourages students to become advocates for social change.

The Civic Education curriculum in Zambia is designed to provide students with a holistic understanding of their roles as citizens in a democratic society. A Civic Education teacher (C.E.T₃) said,

"... Civic Education plays a crucial role in creating a culture of democracy, respect for diversity, and social responsibility among our students."

According to Bergersen and Muleya (2019), students learn about the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, the curriculum empowers them to become informed and engaged citizens. For instance, students learn about the importance of holding government officials accountable and advocating for transparency in decision-making processes.

Active Civic Education curriculum implementation strategies and practices

The best Civic Education curriculum implementation practices and strategies is engaging in active and interactive teaching methods. Education administrators emphasized the importance of using active learning approaches to engage students in Civic Education. Mufalo, et al. (2022) supports this statement as teachers need to use active Civic Education curriculum implementation strategies and practices that arouse the interest of individual learners. They highlighted the effectiveness of experiential learning, role-playing, and simulations in fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills among students.

Among active Civic Education curriculum implementation practices and strategies is the use of student clubs. This was shared by some Civic Education teachers (C.E.T_{1,6,7,11,19}) who said,

"I've developed a civic education club to provide students with a platform to engage in practical civic activities."

Student clubs are an effective strategy for implementing civic education curriculum and engaging students in meaningful learning experiences. They provide a platform for students to discuss and learn about important civic issues. Hess and Mcavoy (2014) support the current study as these clubs can organize debates, community service projects, and workshops, which help students develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and a sense of social responsibility. By participating in these clubs, students are encouraged to engage with their communities, advocate for change, and become active participants in the democratic process.

The study established some of the benefits of integrating Civic Education across subjects as to enhance students' understanding of civic issues and promote interdisciplinary learning. For instance, another school administrator (S.A₈) explained,

"...by integrating civic themes into multiple subjects, we can help students make connections between different disciplines and develop a more comprehensive understanding of civic responsibilities."

Similarly, Mufalo, et al. (2022) and Muntengwa (2020) also recorded that infusing civic concepts into various disciplines such as history, social studies, and language arts, enable students to see the real-world application of their learning. Those who are not privileged to learn Civic Education as a subject will also benefit through discussions and debates about civic issues in other disciplines which may enable them develop critical thinking skills and empathy for diverse perspectives.

Another workable strategy in effective Civic Education curriculum implementation is community involvement. This view was also shared by Muleya (2015, 2018, 2019) and Katongo (2016) where they argued that by involving community members, organizations, and leaders in the development and delivery of the curriculum, students can gain a deeper understanding of the issues facing their communities and learn from real-world

examples of civic engagement. Community involvement also helps to bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world, providing students with opportunities to apply their knowledge in practical ways. A Civic Education teacher (C.E.T.₁₇) elucidated that,

“Sir, teachers should involve the local community in Civic Education programs to provide students with real-world examples and experiences. Inviting guest speakers, organizing field trips, and collaborating with local organizations, can help students connect classroom learning to the world around them.”

Schools can also involve parents and the community in supporting the teaching of Civic Education by encouraging their involvement in school decision-making processes. Inviting parents and community members to serve on advisory boards and attend school meetings can ensure that their perspectives are represented and valued in the school community. This study has shown that partnerships with community organizations can enhance students' civic knowledge and behavior. This is in line with the study conducted by Levine (2012), and Ng'andu and Mulenga (2022) who expounded that students who participated in a Civic Education program that involved collaboration with local community organizations had higher levels of civic engagement and were more likely to continue participating in civic activities after the program ended. Collaboration with community organizations can enrich the Civic Education curriculum by providing students with opportunities to engage in real-world civic activities and learn from experts in the field.

Teachers should incorporate civic engagement projects into the curriculum to help students apply their learning to real-world issues. For example, teachers can organize community service projects, voter registration drives, or advocacy campaigns to promote active citizenship among students.

It was also said by (C.E.T._{2, 6,9,13,20}) that,

“...we can host parent-teacher conferences, community service projects, or informational sessions on civic issues facing Kabwe District. For example, we could organize a community clean-up day where parents, students, and community members work together to beautify a local neighbourhood”.

By providing opportunities for parents and community members to engage with the school and each other, teachers can foster a sense of community and collaboration around Civic Education. This type of event not only reinforces the importance of civic responsibility but also provides a tangible way for parents and community members to get involved in their child's education.

The study has established that some school uses technology such as interactive online platforms, multimedia resources, and educational apps, which create more engaging and interactive lessons that cater to the diverse learning styles of students. For instance, (C.E.T._{1,3,8,15,19}) consolidated response reveals that,

“...since Civic Education is a dynamic subject, there is need to integrate technology during lessons delivering to make learning more interactive and accessible. For example, teachers can use online resources and multimedia presentations to help learners see the real concepts in reality.”

A study by Campbell and Levinson (2009) also suggested that students who participated in an online Civic Education program had higher levels of political knowledge and were more likely to engage in civic activities. Technology can be a valuable tool in Civic Education curriculum implementation, allowing students to access information, engage in discussions, and participate in virtual simulations of civic processes. The study has revealed the need for teachers of Civic Education to participate in on-going professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills in Civic Education. By attending workshops, conferences, and training sessions, teachers can stay up-to-date on best practices and strategies for effective curriculum implementation. These engagements enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies in teaching Civic Education. It was said by an education administrator (S.A.₇) that,

“...it is important for teachers to receive ongoing training and professional development in order to deliver quality Civic Education lessons that are relevant to students' lives and experiences.”

The study emphasised the need for attending training programs, workshops, and researching through various resources to effectively delivering civic content and implementing best practices. Continuous training and support for teachers are essential for ensuring high-quality Civic Education instruction and promoting active citizenship among students. It was revealed that teachers who receive ongoing training and support are better able to engage students in meaningful civic learning experiences. A study by Kahne et al. (2018) also agrees that teachers who participated in professional development workshops on Civic Education reported higher levels of confidence and effectiveness in teaching civic concepts. Continuous professional development is crucial for teachers to stay current with best practices in Civic Education curriculum implementation and to enhance their skills in teaching civic concepts effectively.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the evaluation of Civic Education curriculum implementation in Zambia has generated several key findings that shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of the current system. The study revealed benefits of leaning Civic Education in promoting social cohesion, democratic values, imparting civic knowledge, skills and values as well as nurturing for active citizenship. It was also identified that; partnerships and collaboration, integration of technology and digital resources and teacher professional development are common strategies and practices in improving the quality of Civic Education instruction in Zambia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study provides the following recommendations;

1. The Ministry of Education should intensify continuous professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding of Civic Education principles and teaching methodologies.
2. Civic Education should be integrated across all subjects and grade levels to enable students develop a holistic understanding of their roles as responsible citizens.
3. The ministry should foster partnerships with community stakeholders who provide valuable resources, expertise, and support for civic education programs.
4. The Ministry of Education should develop and strengthen policy frameworks for Civic Education supported by government officials, educational administrators, and other key stakeholders.

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